

**EULOGY
PRONOUNCED AT
THE FUNERAL OF
GEORGE
PEABODY, AT...**

Robert C. Winthrop





547

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EULOGY

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PRONOUNCED AT THE FUNERAL OF

GEORGE PEABODY,

AT PEABODY, MASSACHUSETTS,

2 FEBRUARY, 1879.

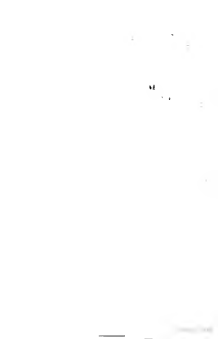
BY

HON. ROBERT C. WINTHROP, LL.D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE PEABODY EDUCATION FUND



SECOND EDITION



II
EULOGY

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PRONOUNCED AT THE FUNERAL OF

GEORGE PEABODY,

AT PEABODY, MASSACHUSETTS,

5 FEBRUARY, 1870.

BY

HON. ROBERT C. WINTHROP, LL.D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE PEABODY ENDOWMENT FUND



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III

WHILE I have been unwilling, my friends, wholly to decline the request of your Committee of Arrangements, or to seem wanting to any service which might, perchance, have gratified him, whom, in common with you all, I have so honored and loved, — I have still felt deeply, and I cannot help feeling, at this moment, more deeply than ever before, that say words of mine or of others might well have been spared on this occasion.

The solemn tones of the organ, the plaintive notes of the funeral chime, the consoling lessons of the Sacred Scriptures, the fervent utterances of prayer and praise, — these would have seemed to me the only appropriate — I had almost said, the only endurable — interruptions of the silent sorrow which befits a scene like this.

Even were it possible for me to add any thing, worth adding, to the tributes on both sides of the



ocean, which already have well-nigh exhausted the language of eulogy, — the formal phrases of a detailed memoir, or of a protracted and studied panegyric, would coagulate upon my lips, and fall frozen upon the ears and hearts of all whom I address, in presence of the lifeless form of one, who has so long been the support, the ornament, the dear delight, of this village of his nativity.

We cannot, indeed, any of us, gather around these cherished remains, and prepare to commit them, tenderly and affectionately, to their mother earth, without a keen sense of personal affliction and bereavement. He was too devoted and loving a brother; he was too kind and thoughtful a kinsman; he was too genial and steadfast a friend, not to be missed and mourned by those around me, as few others have ever been missed and mourned here before. I am not insensible to my own full share of the private and public grief which pervades this community.

And yet, my friends, it is, by no means, sorrow alone, which may well be indulged by us all at such an hour as this. Other emotions, I hazard nothing in saying, far other emotions besides those of grief, are, even now, rising and swelling in all our hearts, — emotions of pride, emotions of joy, emotions of triumph.

Am I not right? How could it be otherwise? What a career has that been, of which the final scene is now, at length, before us! Who can contemplate its rise and progress, from the lowly cradle in this South Parish of old Davenport — henceforth to be known of all men by his name — to the temporary repose in Westminster Abbey, followed by that august procession across the Atlantic, whose wake upon the waters will glow and sparkle to the end of time, growing more and more luminous with the lapse of years, — who, I say, can contemplate that career, from its humble commencement to its magnificent completion, without an irresistible thrill of admiration, and almost of rapture?

Who, certainly, can contemplate the immediate close of this extraordinary life without rejoicing, not only that it was so painless, so peaceful, so happy in itself; not only that it was so providentially postponed until he had been enabled, once more, to revisit his native land, to complete his great American benefactions, to hold personal intercourse with those friends at the South for whose welfare the largest and most cherished of those benefactions was designed, and to take solemn leave of those to whom he was bound by so many ties of affection or of blood, — but that it occurred

at a time, and under circumstances, so peculiarly fortunate for attracting the largest attention, and for giving the widest impression and influence, to his great and inspiring example?

For this, precisely this, as I believe, would have been the most gratifying consideration to our lamented friend himself, could he have distinctly foreseen all that has happened, since he left you a few months since. Could it have been foretold him, as he embarked, with feeble strength and faltering steps, on board his favorite Scotia, at New York, on the 29th of September last, not merely that he was leaving kindfolk and friends and native land for the last time, but that hardly four weeks would have elapsed, after his arrival at Liverpool, before he should be the subject of funeral honors, by command of the Queen of England, and should lie down, for a time, beneath the consecrated arches of that far-famed Minister, among the kings and counsellors of the earth;—could it have been foretold him, that his acts would be the theme of eloquent tributes from high prelates of the Church, and from the highest Minister of the Crown, and that Great Britain and the United States— not always, nor often, alas! in perfect accord— should vie with each other in furnishing their proudest national ships to escort his remains over the

ocean, exhibiting such a funeral fleet as the world, in all its history, had never witnessed before; — could all this have been whispered in his ear, as it was catching these last farewells of relatives and friends, — he must, indeed, have been more than mortal, not to have experienced some unwonted emotions of personal gratification and pride.

But I do believe, from all I have ever seen or known of him, — and few others, at home or abroad, have of late enjoyed more of his confidence, — that far, far above any feelings of this sort, his great heart would have throbbcd, as it never throbbcd before, with gratitude to God and man, that the example which he had given to the world, — by employing the wealth which he had accumulated, during a long life of industry and integrity, in relieving the wants of his fellow-men wherever they were most apparent to him; in providing lodgings for the poor of London; in providing education for the children of our own desolated South; in building a Memorial Church for the parish in which his mother had worshipped; in founding or endowing institutes and libraries and academies of science in the towns in which he was born, in the city in which he had longest resided, and in so many other places with which, for a longer or a shorter time, he had been con-

acted,—that this grand and glorious example, of magnificence and beneficence, would thus be so signally held up to the contemplation of mankind, in a way not only to commend it to their remembrance and regard, but to command for it their respect and imitation. This, I feel assured, he would have felt to be the accomplishment of the warmest wish of his heart; the consummation of the most cherished object of his life.

Our lamented friend was not, indeed, without ambition. He not only liked to do grand things, but he liked to do them in a grand way. We all remember those sumptuous and princely banquets, with which he sometimes diversified the habitual simplicity and frugality of his daily life. He was not without a decided taste for occasional display,—call it even ostentation, if you will. We certainly may not ascribe to him a pre-eminent measure of that sort of charity which shuns publicity, which shrinks from observation, and which, according to one of our Saviour's well-remembered injunctions, "doeth its alms in secret." He may, or he may not, have exercised as much of this kind of beneficence, as any of those in similar condition around him. I fully believe that he did. We all understand, however, that

"Of that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love,"

there can be no record except on high, — or in the grateful hearts of those who have been aided and relieved. That record shall be revealed hereafter. The world can know little or nothing of it now.

But any one must perceive, at a glance, that the sort of charity which our lamented friend illustrated and exercised, was wholly incompatible with concealment or reserve. The great Trusts which he established, the great Institutions which he founded, the capacious and costly Edifices which he erected, were things that could not be hid, which could not be done in a corner. They were, in their own intrinsic and essential nature, patent to the world's eye. He could not have performed these noble acts in his lifetime, as it was his peculiar choice to do, and as it will be his peculiar distinction and glory to have done, without suffering himself "to be seen of men;" without being known, and recognized, and celebrated as their author. He must have postponed them all, as others have done, for posthumous execution; he must have refrained from parting with his millions until death should have wrested them from a reluctant grasp, — had he shrunk from the notoriety and celebrity which inevitably attend upon such a career.

He did not fail to remember, however, — for he was no stranger to the Bible, — that there were at

least two modes of doing good commended in Holy Writ. He did not forget, that the same glorious gospel, nay, that the same incomparable Sermon on the Mount, which said, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth," said, also, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." This, this might almost be regarded as the chosen motto of his later life, and might, not inappropriately, be inscribed as such on his tombstone.

Certainly, my friends, his light has shone before men. Certainly, they have seen his good works. And who shall doubt that they have glorified his Father which is in heaven? Yea, glory to God, glory to God in the highest, has, I am persuaded, swollen up from the hearts of millions, in both hemispheres, with a new fervor, as they have followed him in his grand circumnavigation of benevolence, and as they have witnessed, one after another, his manifold and magnificent endowments. And his own heart, I repeat, would have throbbed and thrilled, as it never thrilled or throbbed before, with gratitude to God and man, could he have foreseen that the matchless example of munificence, which it had been the cherished aim of his later years to exhibit, would be rendered, as it has now been

rendered, so signal, so inspiring, so enduring, so immortal, by the homage which has been paid to his memory by the princes and potentates, as well as by the poor, of the Old World, and by the government and the whole people of his own beloved Country.

I have spoken of the exhibition of this example, as having been the cherished aim of his later years; but I am not without authority for saying, that it was among the fondest wishes of his whole mature life. I cannot forget, that, in one of those confidential consultations with which he honored me some years since, after unfolding his plans, and telling me substantially all that he designed to do,—for, almost every thing he did was of his own original designing,—and when I was filled with admiration and amazement at the magnitude and sublimity of his purposes, he said to me, with that guileless simplicity which characterized so much of his social intercourse and conversation, "Why, Mr. Winthrop, this is no new idea to me. From the earliest years of my manhood, I have contemplated some such disposition of my property; and I have prayed my Heavenly Father, day by day, that I might be enabled, before I died, to show my gratitude for the blessings which He has bestowed upon me, by doing some great good to my fellow-men."

Well has the living Laureate of England sung, in one of his latest published poems,—

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of"

That prayer has been heard and answered. That noble aspiration has been more than fulfilled. The judgment of the future will confirm the opinion of the hour; and History, instead of contenting herself with merely extolling his name, in chronological or alphabetical order, as one among the many benefactors of mankind, will assign him — unless I greatly mistake her verdict — a place by himself, far above all competition or comparison, first without a second, as having done the greatest good for the greatest number of his fellow-men, — so far, at least, as pecuniary means could accomplish such a result, — of which there has thus far been any authentic record in merely human annals.

It would afford a most inadequate measure of his munificence, were I to sum up the dollars or the pounds he has distributed; or the number of persons whom his personal provisions, for dwellings or for schools, will have included, in years to come, on one side of the Atlantic or the other. Tried even by this narrow test, his beneficence has neither precedent nor parallel. But it is, as having attracted and compelled the attention of mankind to the

beauty, the nobleness, the true glory of living and doing for others ; it is, as having raised the standard of munificence to a degree which has almost made it a new thing in the world ; it is, as having exhibited a wisdom and a discrimination in selecting the objects, and in arranging the machinery, of his bounty, which almost entitle him to the credit of an inventor ; it is, as having, in the words of the brilliant Gladstone, " taught us how a man may be the master of his fortune, and not its slave ; " it is, as having discarded all considerations of caste, creed, condition, nationality, in his world-wide philanthropy, regarding nothing human as alien to him ; it is, as having deliberately stripped himself in his lifetime of the property he had so laboriously acquired ; delighting as much in devising modes of bestowing his wealth, as he had ever done in contriving plans for its increase and accumulation ; literally throwing out his bags like some adventurous seaman, who would mount higher and higher to the skies ; and really exulting as he calculated, from time to time, how little of all his laborious earnings he had at last left for himself ; it is, as having furnished this new and living and magnetic example, which can never be lost to history, never be lost to the interests of humanity, never fail to attract, inspire, and stimulate the lovers of their

fellow-men, as long as human wants and human wealth shall exist upon the earth,—it is in this way, that our lamented friend has obtained a pre-eminence among the benefactors of his age and race, like that of Washington among patriots, or that of Shakespeare or Milton among poets.

I do not altogether forget those Miscellanies of old, whom philosophers and poets have so delighted to extol. I do not forget the passing tribute of the great Roman orator to one of the publicans of his own period, as having displayed an incredible benignity in amassing a vast fortune, not "as the prey of avarice, but as the instrument of doing good." I do not forget the founders of the Royal Exchange in London, and of the noble hospital in Edinburgh; the princely merchant of Queen Elizabeth's day, or the "Jingling Geordie" of England's first King James. I do not forget how strikingly Edmund Burke foreshadowed our lamented friend, when he said of one of his own contemporaries, "His fortune is among the largest, — a fortune which, wholly unencumbered, as it is, without one single charge from luxury, vanity, or excess, sinks under the benevolence of its dispenser. This private benevolence, expanding itself into patriotism, renders his whole being the estate of the public, in which he has not reserved a *jeune homme* for himself, of profit,

diversion, or relaxation."¹² I do not forget the Baron de Monthyon, of France, whose noble benefactions are annually distributed by the Imperial Academy, and whose portrait has been combined with that of our own Franklin on a medal commemorative of their kindred beneficence. I recall, too, the refrain of an ode to a late magnificent English duke, on the erection of his statue at Belvoir Castle, which might well have been sung again, when Scory's statue of our friend was so gracefully unveiled by the Prince of Wales, —

"Oh, my brethren, what a glory
To the world is our good man!"

Nor do I fail to remember the long roll of benefactors, dead and living, of whom our own age, and our own country, and our mother country, — New England and Old England, — may so justly boast. But no one imagines that either Calus Carius, or Sir Thomas Gresham, or George Heriot, or Sir George Savile, or any Duke of Rutland, or Monthyon, or Franklin, or any of the later and larger benefactors of our own time or land, can ever vie in historic celebrity, as a practical philanthropist, with him whom we bury here to-day.

Think me not unkindly, my friends, that, for the manifestation of a true spirit of benevolence, two mites will suffice as well as untold millions, — a

cup of cold water, as well as a treasure-house of silver and gold. Think me not unmindful, either, of the grand and glorious results, for the welfare of mankind, which have been accomplished, by purely moral or religious influences; by personal toil and trust, by the force of Christian character and example, by the exercise of some great gifts of intellect or eloquence, by simple self-devotion and self-sacrifice, without any employment whatever of pecuniary means;—by missionaries in the cause of Christ, by reformers of prisons and organizers of hospitals, by Sisters of Charity, by visitors of the poor, by champions of the oppressed; by such women as Elizabeth Fry and Florence Nightingale, and such men as John Howard and William Wilberforce; or, to go further back in history, by men like our own John Eliot, the early apostle to the Indians, or like that sainted Vincent de Paul, whose memory has been so justly honored in France for more than two centuries. But philanthropy of this sort, I need not say, stands on a somewhat different plane, and cannot fairly enter into this comparison.

It is enough to say of our lamented friend, as we have seen and known him of late, that in him were united—as rarely, if ever, before—the largest desire and the largest ability to do good; that his will was, at least, commensurate with his wealth;

and that nothing but the limited extent of even the most considerable earthly estate prevented his enjoying the very antepast of celestial bliss:—

*"For when the power of impating good
Is equal to the will, the human soul
Requires no other heaven."*

And now, my friends, what wonder is it, that all that was mortal of such a man has come back to us, to-day, with such a convey, and with such accompanying honors, as well might have befitting some mighty conqueror, or some princely hero? Was he not, indeed, a conqueror? Was he not, indeed, a hero? Oh! it is not on the battle-field, or on the blood-stained ocean, alone, that conquests are achieved and victories won. There are battles to be fought, there is a life-long warfare to be waged, by each one of us, in our own breasts, and against our own selfish natures. And what conflict is harder than that which awaits the accumulator of great wealth? Who can ever forget, or remember without a shudder, the emphatic testimony to the character of that conflict, which was borne by our blessed Saviour,—who knew what was in man better than any man knows it for himself,—when He said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God;" and when he bade that rich young man, "Sell all that he had and distribute to the poor, and then come and follow him."

It would be doing grievous injustice to our lamented friend, were we to deny or conceal that there were elements in his character which made his own warfare, in this respect, a stern one. He was no stranger to the love of accumulation. He was no stranger to the passion for gaining and saving and hoarding. There were in his nature the germs, and more than the germs, of economy and even of parsimony; and sometimes they would sprout, and spring up, in spite of himself. Nothing less strong than his own will, nothing less indomitable than his own courage, could have enabled him, by the grace of God, to strive successfully against that greedy, grasping, avaricious spirit, which so often besets the talent for acquisition. In a thousand little ways, you might perceive, to the last, how much within him he had contended against, how much within him he had overcome and vanquished. All the more glorious and signal was the victory! All the more deserved and appropriate are these trappings of triumph, with which his remains have been restored to us! You rob him of his richest laurel, you refuse him his brightest crown, when you attempt to cover up or disguise any of those innate tendencies, any of those acquired habits, any of those besetting temptations, against which he struggled so bravely and so triumphantly. Recount,

if you please, every penurious or mercenary act of his earlier or his later life, which friends have ever witnessed, — if they have ever witnessed any, — or which malice has ever whispered or hinted at, — and malice, we know, has not spared him in more ways than one, — and you have only added to his titles to be received and remembered as a hero and a conqueror.

As such a conqueror, then, you have received him from that majestic turreted iron-clad, which the gracious monarch of our motherland has deputed as her own messenger to bear him back to his home. As such a conqueror, you have canopied his funeral car with the flag of his country; — ay, with the flags of both his countries, between whom I pray God that his memory may ever be a pledge of mutual forbearance and affectionate regard. As such a conqueror, you mark the day and the hour of his burial by minute-guns, and fire a farewell shot, it may be, as the clods of his native soil are heaped upon his breast.

We do not forget, however, amidst all this martial pomp, how eminently he was a man of peace; or how earnestly he desired, or how much he had done, to inculcate a spirit of peace, national and international. I may not attempt to enter here, to-day, into any consideration of the influence of

his specific endowments, at home or abroad, American or English; but I may say, in a single word, that I think history will be searched in vain for the record of any merely human acts, recent or remote, which have been more in harmony with that angelic chorus, which, just as the fleet, with this sad freight, had entered on its funeral voyage across the Atlantic, the whole Christian World was uniting to ring back again to the skies from which it first was heard;—any merely human acts, which while, as I have said, they have waked a fresh and more fervent echo of "Glory to God in the highest," have done more to promote "Peace on earth and good-will towards men."

Here, then, my friends, in this home of his infancy, where, seventy years ago, he attended the common village school, and served his first apprenticeship as a humble shop-boy;—here, where, seventeen years ago, his first large public donation was made, accompanied by that memorable sentiment, "Education: a debt due from present to future generations;"—here, where the monuments and memorials of his affection and his munificence surround us on every side, and where he had chosen to deposit that unique enamelled portrait of the Queen, that exquisite gold medal, the gift of his Country, that charming little autograph

note from the Empress of France, that imperial photograph of the Pope, inscribed by his own hand, and whatever other tributes had been most precious to him in life;—here, where he has desired that his own remains should finally repose, near to the graves of his father and mother, enforcing that desire by those touching words, almost the last which he uttered, “*Daughters,—Daughters,—don’t forget,*” —here let us thank God for his transcendent example; and here let us resolve, that it shall neither fail to be treasured up in our hearts, and sacredly transmitted to our children and our children’s children, nor be wholly without an influence upon our own immediate lives. Let it never be said that the torch and the trophies are remembered and cherished, but the example forgotten or neglected.

I may not longer detain you, my friends, from the sad ceremonies which remain to be performed by us; yet I cannot quite release you until I have alluded, in the simplest and briefest manner, to an incident of the last days, and almost the last hours, of this noble life, which has come to me from a source which cannot be questioned. While he was lying, seemingly unconscious, on his death-bed in London, at the house of his kind friend, Sir Curtis Lampton, and when all direct communication with

him had been for a time suspended, it was mentioned aloud in his presence, in a manner, and with a purpose, to test his consciousness, that a highly valued acquaintance had called to see him; but he took no notice of the remark. Not long afterwards, it was stated in a tone loud enough for him to hear, that the Queen herself had sent a special telegram of inquiry and sympathy; but even that failed to arouse him. Once more, at no long interval, it was remarked, that a faithful minister of the Gospel, with whom he had once made a voyage to America, was at the door; and his attention was instantly attracted. That "good man," as he called him with his latest breath, was received by him, and prayed with him, more than once. "It is a great mystery," he feebly observed, "but I shall know all soon;" while his repeated Amens gave audible and abundant evidence that those prayers were not lost upon his ear or upon his heart. The friendships of earth could no longer soothe him. The highest honors of the world,—the kind attentions of a Sovereign whom he knew how to respect, admire, and love,—could no longer satisfy him. The ambassador of Christ was the only visitor for that hour.

Thus, we may humbly hope, was at last explained and fulfilled for him, that mysterious saying

of one of the ancient prophets of Israel, which he had heard many years before, as the text of a sermon by one whom he knew and valued; which had long lingered in his memory; and which, by some force of association or reflection, had again and again been recalled to his mind, and more than once, in my own hearing, been made the subject of his remark: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark; but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light."

At evening time, it was, indeed, light for him. And who shall doubt, that when another morning shall break upon his brow, it shall be a morning without clouds,—all light, and love, and joy,—for "the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof"!

And so I bid farewell to thee, brave, honest, noble-hearted friend! The village of thy birth weeps, to-day, for one who never caused her pain before. The 'Flower of Essex' is gathered at thy grave. Massachusetts mourns thee as a son who has given new lustre to her historic page; and Maine, not unmindful of her joint inheritance in

the earlier glories of the parent State, has opened her noblest harbor, and draped her municipal halls with richest, saddest robes, to do honor to thy remains. New England, from mountain-top to furthest cape, is in sympathy with the scene, and feels the fitness that the hallowed memories of 'Leyden' and 'Plymouth'—the refuge and the rock of her Pilgrim Fathers—should be associated with thy obsequies. This great and glorious Nation, in all its restored and vindicated union, partakes the pride of thy life and the sorrow of thy loss. In hundreds of schools of the desolated South, the children, even now, are chanting thy requiem and weaving chaplets around thy name. In hundreds of comfortable homes, provided by thy bounty, the poor of the grandest city of the world, even now, are breathing blessings on thy memory. The proudest shrine of Old England has unlocked its consecrated vaults for thy repose. The bravest ship of a navy 'whose march is o'er the mountain waves, whose home is on the deep,' has borne thee as a conqueror to thy chosen rest; and, as it passed from isle to isle, and from sea to sea, in a circumnavigation almost as wide as thy own charity, has given new significance to the memorable saying of the great funeral orator of antiquity:

"Of illustrious men, the whole earth is the sepulchre; and not only does the inscription upon columns in their own land point it out, but in that also which is not their own, there dwells with every one an unwritten memorial of the heart."

And now, around thee, are assembled, not only surviving schoolmates and old companions of thy youth, and neighbors and friends of thy maturer years, but votaries of Science, ornaments of Literature, heads of Universities and Academies, foremost men of Commerce and the Arts, ministers of the Gospel, delegates from distant States and rulers of thy own State, all eager to unite in paying such homage to a career of grand but simple Beneficence, as neither rank nor fortune nor learning nor genius could ever have commended. Chiefs of the Republic, representatives and more than representatives of Royalty, are not absent from thy tier. Nothing is wanting to give emphasis to thy example. Nothing is wanting to fill up the measure of thy fame.

But what earthly honor — what accumulation of earthly honors — shall compare for a moment with the supreme hope and trust which we all humbly and devoutly cherish at this hour, that when the struggles and the victories, the pains and the pa-

grants, of time shall all be ended, and the great awards of eternity shall be made up, thou mayest be found among those who are "more than conquerors, through Him who loved us"!

And so we bid thee farewell, brave, honest, noble-hearted Friend of Mankind!

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